

Sermon by:  
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I tend to be very conservative as the guardian of the assets of St. Luke's. And being conservative, I tend to plan for the worst and hope for the best. Currently, the level of pledging does not cover the basic expenses needed to run the church. We only have \$52,000 in pledges to date for 2004. Our budget this year was \$103,900.

When I do brace for the worst - that's when I have to remember the passage in Matthew 6:25, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life; what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on."

Every time I think the end is near, somehow, the congregation steps up to the plate and delivers. And I expect nothing less this year in this time of Stewardship. A finance committee of Doug Farquhar, Louise Megginson, Ellen Welch and myself have been convened to work on a budget for next year and to discuss the financial situation of the church. I thought if I made it easier to understand some of the finances of the church, you might have a better feel for what we need.

St. Luke's is faced with many of the same bills that any household faces – electric, telephone, insurance, taxes (Mont. Co. calls it a bulk trash fee – but it's a tax). It takes a pledge of \$35 a week to cover our commercial insurance, a pledge of \$20 a week for office supplies, and the same for telephone. It takes 2 pledges of \$43 a week for utilities. There are payroll expenses for Rev. Corbett, John Copley and Alice Oliphant. Our assessment to the Diocese in 2004, in which they are asking for a 1% increase from last year is \$8,970. There are general maintenance expenses including the Parish House, the Church and the grounds, as well as others.

We also have to remember that St. Luke's has additional expenses that are more difficult to put a price tag on. These include to bless a marriage, welcome a new child in baptism,

led in worship, teach adults and children in Bible Study and Sunday School, and work within the scope of the National Church and local community. These are not “extras” in the budget like a movie or a dinner out, but essential in the life of the Church.

As a small church, sometimes it’s easiest to recognize the things we can’t do instead of the things we can. The story of God’s love and desire to be in relationship with us is exactly the opposite. It is a story of abundance. If we focus on what we don’t have, we will never see the strengths and goodness that are at St. Luke’s and how we can grow it.

We support each other in times of celebration, and we help each other in times of crisis. St. Luke’s is a place blessed with an unending amount of heart. I can personally attest to the depth of the support and caring this small congregation is capable of. It would make the National Cathedral blush! That’s when we are at our best. When we need someone to lean on, Kathy is there as our Shepherd, and we – as a congregation – show what St. Luke’s is really about in our support and love to those that need us the most.

Today is the Feast of Christ the King and what it celebrates is that Jesus is king because he heals our weaknesses, not because he had supremacy over everyone. To what extent can St. Luke’s be a place of such healing and hope? The bible is clear in pronouncing that we are not alone in facing financial adversity. God is always present. Your pledge is about the personal and spiritual relationship between you and God. It is your commitment to the mission and calling of St. Luke’s in the community. This day asks us to follow the ultimate gift giver – Jesus, and look at our lives and see what we can share in joy for the ministry and mission of St. Luke’s - the community known and loved and gathered in the name of Jesus Christ.

As Treasurer, I am in the role of being the truth teller. It’s a little scary, but then it also means being truthful about the hope as well. I consider being the Treasurer of St. Luke’s as an honor. It’s an honor because I get to watch the miracles unfold every day in this Chapel of Ease. We have been blessed by God and we all must do what we can to bring

forth the kingdom of God in our parish. I ask that you help in continuing the good works by pledging your support. Amen.